

VZCZCXR05065
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHNMM #1011 3581106
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 241106Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5537
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHMFIISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS NIAMEY 001011

DEPT FOR AF/W AND AF/RSA; PLS PASS TO USAID FOR AFR/W
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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM SOCI PHUM NG

SUBJECT: Niger: Government Returns to Negotiation Table

Ref: a) Niamey 1009, b) Niamey 1008, c) Niamey 1005, Niamey 1004

¶1. On December 23, during the state television evening news broadcast, the Minister of Communication and Government Spokesperson read a Government of Niger (GON) statement about recent developments in the Inter-Nigerien Political Dialogue (INPD). Following are highlights of the statement:

(Begin text)

"The Government of the Republic of Niger has just learned, with surprise and indignation, of a statement purportedly from ECOWAS, dated December 22, 2009...The statement is surprising, both in content and its timing, and does not conform to the conclusions of the Heads of State and Government Conference held on October 17 in Abuja...The Government marks its indignation regarding the attitude of the ECOWAS Commission, which makes pronouncements on the mandate of the President of the Republic of Niger without having competence to do so...the Government of Niger reminds the members of the ECOWAS Commission that they are subject to the obligation of restraint, and therefore they do not have the right to indulge in obtrusive and counter-productive statements...The Government reminds that a referendum was organized on August 4, 2009, and on that occasion a large majority of the Nigerien people clearly favored the succession of the 6th Republic which is more suited to our realities. This constitutional referendum establishes a 6th Republic and terms that provide that the President of the Republic's mandate will reach its end in 2012. The Government ...reaffirms its willingness to dialogue, and reiterates its support for the ongoing mediation."

(End text)

¶2. Comment: Embassy Niamey has just learned that the GON delegation will return to the negotiation table on December 24. During the GON delegation's walk out on December 23, Minister of Justice Garba Lompo told journalists that "From now on, we will arrest any person who infringes the law...we will arrest all those who were subject to a warrant of arrest whenever they set foot in Niger." Apparently, the three opposition leaders who stayed away from Niamey - Hama Amadou, Mohammed Issoufou, and Mahamane Ousmane - had made a wise decision. The recent developments show some confusion and substantiate reports of a schism within the presidential camp between hawks and doves. End comment.

ALLEN